

Peronist Says Reds Never Hurt Nation

The victory of Peronist and Communist candidates in the recent Argentine elections — and the subsequent downfall of President Arturo Frondizi — once again focuses world attention on former Dictator Juan Peron. What is Peron's connections with Fidel Castro and international communism? Here is an exclusive interview with a man in close contact with Peron and with Cuban officials.

By **JESSE GORDON**
and **BRIG. GEN. HUGH B. HESTER (Ret.)**
North American Newspaper Alliance

HAVANA — "The Soviet Union never harmed the Argentine nation, diplomatically or economically," says Juan Peron's heir apparent.

The No. 2 man in the Peronist movement is John William Cooke, who has been living here since April 1960.

Cooke is Peron's personal representative not only to Cuba but to all other Latin American countries. He said he is in frequent contact with the ex-dictator who is in exile in Spain.

"Peron has always been a strong supporter of Fidel Castro and supports him now as strongly as ever," Cooke said.

"Peron is not pro-Soviet," Cooke went on, "but he is against the United States."

Cooke said Peron is "waiting for the call to return to Argentina," but that he will

return only after "a popular triumph of the people."

He said he does not think the times "are favorable for Peron at present" for such a return, nor does he believe a civil war is likely "because the military is too solidly entrenched" and "the people have nothing with which to fight against the military oligarchy now ruling the country."

Cooke explained that Peron is not a Marxist-Leninist or even a socialist, but a "nationalist who opposes imperialism." He said the ex-dictator is in touch with Castro and his Argentine-born aide, "Che" Guevara, and is on the best of terms with them "despite ideological differences."

Peron, he said, backed Castro

The authors of this interview have written as a team for the Christian Science Monitor, The Progressive magazine and other publications. Jesse Gordon, writing in the liberal magazine The Nation on Nov. 19, 1960, broke the story on the secret base in Guatemala where the Cuban refugee army was in training for the April 1961 invasion. Brig. Gen. Hugh Hester was food administrator in the American zone of Berlin from 1945 to 1947 and is a contributing editor to the nondenominational magazine The Churchman.

Special Report



JUAN PERON
Against The U. S.

in a letter sent in December 1959 to members of the Peronist party.

He said Peron condemned the decisions against Cuba taken at the Punta Del Este conference, claiming that "Cuba had the right to choose her own road to liberation from imperialism."

Cooke is an Argentine by birth, despite his Anglo-Saxon name. A former professor of economics at the University of Buenos Aires, he was the leader of the Peronists in the

Argentine Chamber of Deputies from 1946 to 1952.

Only 39, Cooke is the leading ideologist of the Peronist movement.

"There are many differences among the leaders of the party," he said, "but I am continuing the fight within the party for the true party ideals."

In 1956, two years after he fled Argentina, Peron met with Cooke in Venezuela and wrote to party leaders in Argentina naming Cooke as head of the Peronist party and, in case of Peron's death, his successor.

Previously, in 1955, Cooke had returned to Argentina and was immediately jailed. He escaped in March 1957 to Chile, where he was arrested with five other Peronist leaders. (One of the five, Patrick Kelly, was charged with killing a Communist.)

Cooke, disguised as a woman, broke out of jail and made his way to Panama.

In November 1958, Cooke returned to Argentina and was again arrested and jailed, this time on a battleship. The master escape artist was soon on a rowboat crossing the Strait of Magellan and reached freedom in Uruguay.

He came here April 13, 1960, to attend a general conference of all Latin-American countries.

Cooke visited the United States once, in 1941. His great-grandfather, according to Cooke, was a "typical Yankee."



HESTER